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ABSTRACT

Currently, training programs for management are an integral part of most organizations. One of the concerns about training programs has been the lack of research supporting change in management training. Recently, counselors have become involved in Human Resources Management (HRM). Organizations have been criticized for making few attempts to evaluate the effectiveness/utility of training in general. Management training studies have ignored the importance of long-term effectiveness. In this study, newspaper managers who had received no prior management training in communication skills from their employer were randomly assigned to treatment (N=18) and control (N=18) groups. Instrumentation utilized was descriptive in nature and relied on data from "describers," the direct supervisors of the participant/manager. Describers were derived from information provided by members of the treatment and control groups. After the workshop, training participants were given 4 months to incorporate their new skills into their everyday management communication behaviors and performance, or discard the principles taught in their treatment program and continue behaving and performing at their previous level. Results indicated that a trend toward improved behavioral and performance scores did take place. Improvement may have been linked directly to the management priniciples learned and practiced in the training workshop or may have been due to chance. This positive change was evident and remained constant over a long term (4 months). (Author/ABL)

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MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION TRAINING:

THE NEED FOR LONG-TERM EFFECTIVENESS STUDIES

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MANAGEMENT TRAINING:

THE NEED FOR LONG-TERM EFFECTIVENESS STUDIES

ABSTRACT

Counselors who have some training in Human Resource Management (HRM) are finding professional opportunities in business and industry. Quite often counselors may be employed in the Training and Development section of a HRM office thereby involving themselves in the research and development of management training programs.

Management training studies have ignored the importance of long-term effectiveness. Yet, information derived from longitudinal studies can help the trainer assess if a training program is really instrumental in facilitating change in management behaviors (Brandenburg, 1982; Solinger and Deming, 1982; Sloan, 1981). By example, a case is made for determining the effects that training has on management as it relates to their communication skills through assessments spaced several months apart.

MANAGEMENT TRAINING:

THE NEED FOR LONG-TERM EFFECTIVENESS STUDIES

The development of management personnel has been recognized as one of businesses' greatest challenges. Extensive and varied management training programs have evolved. Currently, training programs for management are an integral part of most organizations. Yet, problems have been identified in conjunction with training programs implemented in both government and business. One of these concerns has been the lack of research supporting change due to management training. Although evaluating change (Mezoff, 1982) has been viewed as a top priority of business in order to ensure the effectiveness of training programs, a dearth of research exists in this area. Even more shocking and significant is the fact that long-term change studies related to management training effectiveness seem practically non-existent. Recently, counselors have become involved in Human Resources Management (HRM) i.e. Employee Assistance Programs, Personnel, Career Development, and Training and Development. It is in this area of HRM that counselors can contribute with their counseling and research skills.

Organizations have been criticized for making few attempts to evaluate the effectiveness/utility of training in general. Ninety-nine percent of all management development programs are not formally evaluated (Miles and Biggs, 1979). If one believes that program evaluation can help build a more solid overall plan for program development (Galosy, 1983), then one has to wonder why more empirical research of a longitudinal nature has not been conducted.

The authors of this research argue that problems to long-term effects of management training and development have become an issue, and that more positive attitudes toward systems of efficacy determinates need to be emphasized.

With information derived from program effectiveness studies, a trainer can determine which development program to offer. The findings of one such model is reported here in an effort to encourage empirical research that is consistent with the goals of change and adaptation resulting from training.

Participants

Subjects participating in this study were randomly selected from Dallas Times Herald managers who had received no prior management training in communications from their place of employment. Participants were randomly assigned to treatment (18 subjects) and control (18 subjects) groups to ensure homogeneity of characteristics.

Instrumentation utilized was descriptive in nature and relied on data from the direct supervisors of the participant/manager. The supervisor was called a describer. Describers were derived from information provided by members of the treatment and control groups. Supervisors acted as describers for control group members and treatment group members.

Instrument and Data Collection

One effective method of determining whether management communication skills have changed due to training is through information dervived from instruments that measure behavioral change (Zenger and Hargis, 1982). The Performance Appraisal Data

Sheet (PADS) is such an instrument. It provides the manager/participant and the trainer with information on movement as related to communication skills development. The PADS, a descriptive device, was used by the managers' supervisors to describe the managers' on the job behaviors and communication skills. The PADS calls for ratings from the supervisor of both treatment and control group participants on the performance of the manager/participant and was developed for the purpose of measuring movement in performance and to provide for measurable statistical information as well as clinical information.

The PADS measures management communication behaviors and performance in eight critical areas:

1) Upward Communications and Participation
2) Clarification of Goals and Objectives
3) Orderly Work Planning
4) Management Feedback Behavior
5) Controlling Details
6) Applying Goal Pressure
7) Recognizing and Reinforcing Performance
8) Manager Approachability

Pre-test data in the treatment group consisted of the administration of the PADS to the manager/participant's supervisor. After completion of the PADS, the ratings were collected via confidential inter-office mail utilizing the Dallas Times Herald mail system. Supervisors of control group subjects completed the PADS for control group members and returned their ratings via inter-office mail. Four months after treatment, a second PADS description was collected from the supervisors of the

treatment group and control group participants. One treatment group member left the company before this study was complete.

The PADS was utilized to measure the difference in scores between pre-test and post-test treatment and control group descriptions and to determine movement in communications behavior.

Treatment

Management development training consisted of 32 hours of in-house developed seminars. Training module areas included: employee and human relations, listening, performance appraisal, memo writing skills, goal setting, supervisor skills, resolving problems, rewarding performance, work participation, motivation, team building, delegation, and discipline. The training of group subjects was spread over four weeks allowing eight hours of training per week.

Results

The PADS was used to provide data on movement in performance pertaining to eight critical management communication skills areas and to chart the differences between treatment and control group descriptions. A t-test was used to provide information from the surveys.

Pre-test and post-test results of the statistical analysis derived from the PADS comparing the treatment group with the control group are reported in tables 1, 2, and 3. A comparison of the treatment group scores before and after training is presented in table 1 (mean scale scores are reported). A t-test was utilized to determine movement in management communication

behaviors. The results indicate two areas in which there was significant improvement (.05): A) Orderly work planning and B)delegating behaviors. An analysis of table 1 reveals that treatment group gains were recorded in all areas.

Close scrutiny of table 2 indicates that control group subjects made no significant gains or losses with regard to their management communication skills. Table 3 provides information on the total amount of movement that the treatment group participants were able to make as compared to their control group counterparts. As indicated in this study, performance and behavioral growth in management communications skills as measured from the instrument chosen for this research may have been affected by the experimental approaches utilized. (It is possible that some increase was due to chance).

Discussion

After the workshop, training participants were given four months to incorporate their new skills into their everyday management communication behaviors and performance, or discard the principles taught in their treatment program and continue behaving and performing at their previous level. As indicated by the results of this study, a trend toward improved behavioral and performance scores did take place and may be linked directly to the management principles learned and practiced in the training workshop or be due to chance. This positive change was evident and remained constant over the long-term. Long-term in this study was defined as being four months in length.

Previous research indicates that measuring the effectiveness

of training is best undertaken with delayed and repeated measurements (Phillips, 1983; Solinger and Deming, 1982; Van Maanen, 1973; Laird, 1978). Results of this study support some aspects of the Stroud (1959) study on the effectiveness of training; however, the present study used a delayed measure over a longer period of time and did not reflect as many areas of significance. As in the Gulf Oil study (Hersey, 1962), the trend toward improved scores provided executives, human resource professionals, and supervisors of the Dallas Times Herald feedback on their managment training program, an indication of areas where more work may be needed and gave them hope that the trend of increased scores in certain areas e.g. orderly work planning and delegating behavior will be stable or continue to improve over time.

Conclusion

Empirical research completed within a business setting was presented to encourage the further investigation and reporting of long-term training effects on improving managements' communication skills. This research is not intended to be representative of the most effective method of research in testing for effectiveness of short and long term benefits of training. However, it was designed to meet the specific needs of the impacted oganization and its unique services. Management training programs have been systemically implemented in all facets of business. Short term, or immediate effectiveness of training programs has been reported. It is now time to expect empirical research that demonstrates the worth of management

training via longitudinal studies which measure long-term effectiveness. It is within this facet of business and industry, i.e. Human Resources Management, that counselors can be most effective in utilizing their counseling and research skills.

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TABLE 1

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL DATA SHEET
Supervisor's Average Scale Score
for Treatment Group

	Before training	Four Months after training
Upward communication and participation	4.6	4.9
Clarification of goals and objectives	4.8	5.0
Orderly work planning	4.3	5.4
Feedback behaviors	4.6	4.7
Effectively applying goal pressure	3.5	4.0
Delegating behavior	3.6	4.5
Recognizing and reinforcing performance	4.4	4.7
Manager approachability	4.9	5.0
	$\bar{x}$= 4.34	$\bar{x}$= 4.78

TABLE 2

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL DATA SHEET
Supervisor's Average Scale Score
for Control Group

	Before training	Four months after training
Upward communication and participation	4.7	4.6
Clarification of goals and objectives	4.6	4.7
Orderly work planning	4.4	4.4
Feedback behaviors	4.5	4.6
Effectively applying goal pressure	3.9	3.6
Delegating behavior	3.7	3.7
Recognizing and reinforcing performance	4.3	4.2
Manager approachability	4.7	4.4
	x= 4.35	x= 4.28

TABLE 3

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL DATA SHEET
Difference in Mean Score
Four Months After Treatment

Control -.07

Treatment +.44